

DAILY PILOT

Thursday, March 22, 2012
2:49 p.m. PDT

HOME NEWS SPORTS LIFE + ARTS OPINION DEALS

O.C. Now Archives For The Record Obituaries Milestones Contact Advertise

IN THE NEWS: PHOTO GALLERY: TOSHIBA CLASSIC THURSDAY PRO-AM

Search 

Home

advertisement

OCTA removes 19th Street Bridge from plan

Move ends years of studies, controversy about the potential bridge over the Santa Ana River that would connect Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach.

  Comments 3 Share 44

By Mike Reicher

March 12, 2012 | 7:12 p.m.

ORANGE — The Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors voted Monday to strike the proposed 19th Street Bridge from the county's master plan.

The move effectively ends decades of studies and controversy about the potential bridge that would have linked Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach over the Santa Ana River.

Environmentalists and 19th Street residents pleaded Monday to eliminate the bridge, as Huntington Beach Mayor and OCTA Director Don Hansen ushered through the unusual vote to change the county's long-standing master plan.

TOPICS

- Highway Transportation
- Board of Directors
- Janet Nguyen

Newport Beach leaders were the lone holdouts among the three most affected cities; Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach opposed the bridge. Under the county's typical procedures, all three would have to agree to abandon the bridge idea.

But OCTA directors agreed that the bridge was unlikely to ever be built because of its forecasted \$150-million cost, the difficulties in obtaining permits from state and federal regulators, and intense opposition from nearby residents.

The vote was unanimous, except for OCTA Director and County Supervisor Janet Nguyen, who abstained.

"We're feeling very relieved," said Sandie Frankiewicz, who owns two homes on 19th Street, one of which would have likely been demolished to widen the street for the bridge.

Officials from Huntington and Newport said Monday that they would discuss ways to improve the existing roadways to accommodate the anticipated population growth.

"The city of Huntington Beach is very much aware that the elimination of this bridge has consequences," Hansen said.

More traffic on Coast Highway was one of the reasons Newport City Councilman Steve Rosansky revived talks about the bridge last year. Since the early 1990s, residents and officials in Costa Mesa and Huntington have worked to scrap the bridge, but Newport kept protesting, causing the process to stall.

Rosansky and Newport Deputy Public Works Director Dave Webb spoke at the meeting in an attempt to keep the bridge talks alive and to oblige the other cities to make traffic fixes. They hoped to

replicate a process that OCTA undertook up the river with the Gisler-Garfield avenues bridge, another proposed Costa Mesa-Huntington connector that faced a similar predicament.

After they couldn't agree to build or remove that bridge, Huntington, Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley officials decided about five years ago to improve existing streets near Gisler, instead of building the bridge.

But the span remains on the county master plan, in case the other measures aren't successful.

Without that type of agreement, Webb said he was skeptical that other cities would work to alleviate traffic.

"What are the assurances that any mitigations are going to be done?" Webb asked after the vote.

Even though the Gisler-Garfield improvements appeared to be helping, County Supervisor and OCTA Director John Moorlach also called for that bridge's removal from the master plan Monday. He said that eliminating both should be accomplished in "one fell swoop."

That request appeared to take OCTA staff members and directors by surprise, and Moorlach asked for the issue to be brought before the board at a future meeting.

One significant reason the county maintains a master plan of highways is to assist cities and developers in planning for future growth. Since the plan was created in the 1950s, local agencies have used the proposed 19th Street Bridge in their traffic forecasting, and have required developers to make road improvements accordingly.

Developers will now have to adjust.

Without the bridge, Newport Banning Ranch would generate congestion at more intersections than with the bridge, according to its environmental impact report. The proposed large-scale residential, resort and commercial development near the border of Costa Mesa and Newport would trigger failing grades at nine additional intersections, including seven intersections on West Coast Highway.

mike.reicher@latimes.com

Twitter: @mreicher



Comments

3

Share 44

« Previous Story

More The Daily Pilot is the leading source, in print and online, for news, entertainment and sports in Costa Mesa and Newport Beach.

Next Story »

Code Enforcement tackling South Bristol Street, Balboa Village



Fair Board votes to stop elephant rides

Comments (3)

[Add / View comments](#) | [Discussion FAQ](#)

fattyboup at 7:42 PM March 12, 2012

Stop the massive development project at Banning Ranch (over twice as large and nearly six times as dense as anything ever built along the OC coast in recent memory).

Save Banning Ranch as open space for future generations!

Join the Banning Ranch Conservancy www.banningranchconservancy.org 714-719-2148

KevinN22 at 1:20 PM March 12, 2012